

ARIZONA STATE LEGISLATURE
Forty-eighth Legislature – First Regular Session

ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

Minutes of Meeting
Thursday, January 18, 2007
Senate Hearing Room 1 -- 1:30 p.m.

Chairman Alan Maguire called the meeting to order at 1:40 p.m. and attendance was noted by the secretary.

Members Present

Mr. Jim DiCello
Dr. Eugene Garcia

Ms. Johanna Haver
Ms. Karen Merritt

Ms. Anna Rosas
Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman

Members Absent

Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan

Ms. Eileen Klein

Dr. John Baracy

Speakers Present

Judy Boyer, Technical Writing Consultant, Aha! Inc.
Rolanda Bell, Research and Evaluation, Arizona Department of Education (ADE)
Cindy Turner, Aha! Inc.
Irene Moreno, Arizona Department of Education (ADE)
Micky Gutier, Arizona Department of Education (ADE)
Dr. Suzy Seibert, Aha! Inc.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 20, 2006 MINUTES OF TASK FORCE MEETING

Mr. DiCello moved that the November 20, 2006 Minutes of Task Force Meeting be approved. Ms. Haver seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Presentation and Discussion of Information Compiled from Presentation to the Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force.

Chairman Maguire referred to the ELL Program Summary (Attachment 1), which was provided to members at the previous meeting, and is a summary of information the schools presented to the Task Force. In addition, the Arizona Department of Education compiled performance data to fill out the bottom half of the matrix. This information has been verified against the minutes and

against the tapes of the meeting. It was not sent back to each district. The Summary shows that patterns emerge, which is the core of today's presentations.

Judy Boyer, Technical Writing Consultant, Aha! Inc., said she has been assisting the ELL Task Force. Ms. Boyer said her background includes a University of Arizona Bachelors' Degree in Writing. She has worked with Aha! Inc. for approximately four years. She has worked on the correlation of ELL Standards and Arizona Academic Standards, and ELL assessments. Ms. Boyer said she previously worked with the Administration on Aging doing outcome-based performance measures for services to the aging. Ms. Boyer said she has compiled the data that districts and schools have been giving to the Task Force in presentation form to provide a basic snapshot of the ELL Program, and the schools' common practices.

Chairman Maguire explained the districts that were chosen to give presentations were randomly picked. He said the Task Force chose different types of districts, but did not attempt to produce a statistically reliable sample of districts.

Ms. Boyer agreed. She said it is not a perfect sample, but is something to start with.

Dr. Garcia asked if there was a summary of demographics of the districts that gave presentations. Ms. Boyer replied no but she could do that. Dr. Garcia said that would be helpful.

Ms. Boyer continued the presentation, explaining Methodology and Program Elements.

Ms. Boyer summarized Demographics, Class Size and English Language Development.

Chairman Maguire noted that the district presentations used many different formats that were difficult to compare, and this presentation is an effort to give the Task Force members information in a comprehensive format.

Ms. Boyer continued the presentation: SEI vs. Mainstream; Typical Day, Staffing Monitoring and Assessment; Evidence of Success and Special Programs.

In response to query from Dr. Garcia, Ms. Boyer said the numbers in the right-hand column of the Evidence of Success and Special Programs are set and come from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE).

Ms. Boyer read the Analysis of Local Education Agency (LEA) ELL Program Data From ELL Task Force Presentations (Analysis) (Attachment 4), and also referred to the School/District Comparisons (Attachment 3), which is a breakdown of the data. Ms. Boyer said the basic goal of the Task Force is to look for a higher rate of reclassification, so AHA! Inc. determined which schools had high reclassification and high progress.

Dr. Garcia asked if the reclassification was within one year, and Ms. Boyer said that was her understanding.

Dr. Garcia said a school could artificially meet a high criteria based on who came into that grade that year, as opposed to who had been served by their program, and asked if this data considered

that scenario. Ms. Boyer replied not at this time. Ms. Boyer said the task for Aha!, Inc. was to try to get empirical data from what they had. Dr. Garcia said he understood that ADE does have longitudinal data on children because they do have student numbers. Dr. Garcia said it would be more accurate to frame the criteria in terms of which schools actually made progress, by looking at students served by a particular program, as opposed to students who came in or out of a program.

Rolanda Bell, Research and Evaluation, Arizona Department of Education (ADE), said as to the “making progress criteria”, the ADE looked to see if a student had two data points. If a student moved up one level from the year before, the student progressed. The next consideration was to look at the percentage of students who made progress within a district.

Dr. Garcia said that is a longitudinal assessment.

Ms. Haver said it is her understanding of how Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) works.

Ms. Haver said students who came in late were eliminated and were not part of AYP.

Ms. Bell said AYP is a different criterion than for the students that were making progress or were reclassified. For the AYP, the student must be present a certain percentage of the school year to be counted in the analysis.

Dr. Garcia said the data is not longitudinal, but is whoever is present.

Ms. Boyer said it is the data they have at the moment. She continued reading the Analysis.

Dr. Garcia asked if Ms. Boyer looked at numbers and percentages of students in the analysis of Desert Shadows Middle School in Nogales Unified School District. He said percentages could be deceiving. Ms. Boyer replied she used percentages so that she could compare one school to another, whether it had a low or high population, but the actual numbers are in the ELL Program Summary (Attachment 1).

Ms. Boyer continued reading the Findings of the Analysis (Attachment 4).

Ms. Rosas suggested looking into the numbers of schools that did make AYP. She said one of the schools that did not make AYP filed an appeal based on not having tested the percentage because of the high level of special education students in that school, and did meet AYP after the appeal.

Ms. Boyer continued reading the Findings and Conclusion of the Analysis (Attachment 4). She then read Future Actions (Attachment 2). She said Aha! Inc. is currently working on a survey, and hopes to have a list of schools that are making Category 1 and Category 2 available to the Task Force for the next meeting, or the meeting after that. She said the survey participants would be chosen from all schools in the State of Arizona.

Dr. Garcia said those schools which made presentations were used as a methodology test.

Ms. Merritt said she is concerned with the definition of how long it takes a student to become proficient, because some beginning students may have moved from California at an intermediate level, and it will take them less time than someone who just came into the United States. Even in that group, students who had a good education in another country will develop English proficiency earlier. She said to get a definition of how long it takes to become proficient, the data should be only for students who came in at pre-emergent and emergent levels. Ms. Boyer said the report was not trying to define that. Ms. Merritt said the Task Force will need to get that answer and questioned if the State system can do that.

Chairman Maguire commented the task is difficult. The presentation tries to look for commonalities in real districts, not for the purpose of making judgment, but to see if there is a pattern.

Ms. Bell commented on the length of time it takes to reclassify ELL students. She said that even though current data is limited, there is a preliminary analysis of data from 2004 as to students that come in at kindergarten or first grade to determine how long it takes them to exit the program.

Ms. Merritt said that data would be helpful. However, there is another group of students that arrive in 7th grade, new to the country, and another group that arrives in 11th grade. She said it would be helpful to see data at different age levels. Ms. Boyer said the issue, in terms of making that data clean, is that if they are in 7th grade, it is not known how long they were in an ELL program.

Ms. Merritt said it could be known if the students were emergent or basic. Ms. Bell said yes, but only at that point in time. The data does not take into account a student's history before 2004.

In response to query from Dr. Garcia regarding the definition of "making progress", Ms. Bell explained the definition is the student moved up at least one level from the year before.

Ms. Rosas asked if the data on students reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (FEP) would be analyzed as to the students that have been reclassified to see how well they are doing. Ms. Bell said that data is available and is reported in the ADE Federal Bi-Annual Evaluation. Those numbers can be extracted and presented to the Task Force.

Chairman Maguire said there are two parallel tracks – a live, data driven exercise, presentation and analysis of what actually exists, and, at the same time, an academic, hypothetical, idealistic conversation with experts. The idea now is to push the data until positive patterns emerge, and then ultimately synthesize that actual experience with more idealized experience from the experts.

Chairman Maguire said the Task Force has received testimony from two expert panels that said these strategies work. He said in a perfect world, the live data would match the recommended stylized, idealism model. Therefore, the Task Force could say they have confirmation from two different methodologies, an academic methodology, a hypothetical methodology and an analysis of actual practice.

Mr. DiCello noted the Task Force must keep in mind the content of H.B. 2064 because a model may be very successful, but it may not be legal. The Task Force is charged with developing models that meet the criteria in H.B. 2064.

Chairman Maguire said analysis has been unconstrained to this time. Development of models will be constrained by the law.

THE MEETING RECESSED AT 2:32 P.M.

THE MEETING RECONVENED AT 2:47 P.M. ALL MEMBERS WERE PRESENT.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE ARIZONA K-12 ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STANDARDS

Cindy Turner, Aha! Inc., said that in September 2003, Aha! Inc. began working with the Arizona Department of Education, English Acquisition Services. Ms. Turner presented a Power Point entitled Arizona English Language Learner Assessment and the English Language Learners Proficiency Standards (Attachment 5). She also distributed the English Language Learner (ELL) Proficiency Standards (Attachment 6).

Chairman Maguire asked if, in terms of speaking proficiency, it could be said that a basic student speaks with some errors, using present and past verb tenses.

Dr. Garcia said it is critical to weave together the standards and the items on the assessments. He asked if the United States Department of Education (NCLB), approved the AZELLA as appropriately aligned with the standards.

Irene Moreno, Arizona Department of Education, said the ADE has not heard back from the federal NCLB.

Ms. Turner continued with her presentation (Attachment 5).

In response to query from Mr. DiCello, Ms. Merritt said it takes about three weeks from the time a student takes the test to get the results and to begin instruction.

Dr. Garcia asked the approximate cost of each assessment.

Ms. Merritt explained the schools do not pay the costs. The State is paying costs. Costs would include material, labor, shipping and scoring. She said scoring the assessment is very expensive.

Ms. Turner said there are also development and implementation costs.

Ms. Turner continued with her presentation. She said proficiency standards combine the principle of language development, second language learning, listening to obtain skills and knowledge in Arizona's academic standards to acquire language necessary for practical academic and social interaction. She said the proficiency standards are not a supplement to Arizona's K-12 Language Art Standards. However, the proficiency standards encompass and

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align with the Arizona Language Art Standards. The Language Art Standards are embedded in the proficiency standards.

Ms. Turner explained the proficiency standards are built on a continuum, which is basically how language is learned. Within the continuum of skills, there is language art content, which native English speaking students are learning in the mainstream classroom. In addition, there are oral language skills, which are not in academic standards.

Dr. Garcia asked if there is anything different that you would not expect an English-speaking child to be able to do that you expect of an ELL student. Ms. Turner replied no. A language process is a language process.

Chairman Maguire inquired if all the language arts standards are in the ELL standards. Ms. Turner replied no.

Ms. Boyer said about 90% of the Language Arts Standards are in the ELL standards.

Chairman Maguire asked if all the ELL standards are in the Language Arts Standards.

Ms. Turner replied no. She said many teachers would like to use proficiency standards to help native English speaking students.

Ms. Turner explained the correlation of the ELL standards to grade levels (Attachment 5).

Dr. Garcia commented that when a student is determined to be making progress, they move one level on the AZELLA. The student could move from pre-emergent to emergent and still be at the beginning level in terms of language ability. Movement from emergent to basic is progress but the student is still at the beginning level. He said it seems the student is progressing, but is not progressing with regard to the standards.

Ms. Boyer responded that making progress is not the only criteria for the analysis. Reclassifying is probably the most important criteria.

Ms. Merritt said she looks at the standards as driving the instruction, and she looks at the language proficiency test for measuring a student's growth.

Dr. Garcia said the purpose is to line up the two standards in order to know if the instruction is making a difference in how the students are moving.

Ms. Turner explained when the standards were developed, there was much discussion as to the necessity to go to a pre-production level.

Chairman Maguire said it is not unreasonable to assume that the band of the beginning level might be wider than the band of early intermediate.

Dr. Garcia questioned how relevant a move is with regard to succeeding in an English classroom, which is what the standards require. He asked when it is determined that an ELL student could function in an English classroom.

Ms. Turner said when a student has tested as proficient in their category, they are solidly in the intermediate level.

Ms. Rosas commented the intermediate level is when the correlation to the academic is seen.

Ms. Merritt commented that every student develops English proficiency at a different rate, but most students that enter at emergent or pre-emergent levels zoom through pre-emergent, emergent and basic. The progression in intermediate slows down because so much is happening.

Micky Gutier, Arizona Department of Education, in response to query from Mr. DiCello, explained that if a student's total composite scaled score is pre-emergent, emergent, basic or intermediate, they are put in the ELL program, which is where the funding is. Once a student scores proficient on the AZELLA, funding stops.

In response to query from Ms. Haver, Mr. Gutier said ADE is working with Harcourt Assessment, Inc. to have data sent directly to ADE.

Ms. Turner continued with her presentation (Attachment 5, page 12).

In response to query from Chairman Maguire, Ms. Boyer explained the codes used in the ELL charts (Attachment 5, pages 13-16).

Ms. Turner continued with her presentation (Attachment 5, pages 16-20).

Ms. Merritt said if a student is struggling with literacy, even if their oral skills are strong, they might need to be in the speaking, listening classroom because a lot of vocabulary is taught. Ms. Merritt said if the four hours per day model were followed, the classes would be on different skills, and students could be placed in the classes they need.

Dr. Garcia said the AZELLA is aligned with the ELL Standards. He asked if it should be expected that a student who scores high proficiency on the AZELLA in second grade, should also do well on the AIMS, which is a test aligned with the Language Arts standards.

Ms. Turner responded the AZELLA measures language efficiency. A student could be proficient on the AZELLA and intermediate on the ELL Standards.

Dr. Suzy Seibert, Aha! Inc., cautioned that when a student exits intermediate, the student may be in eighth grade, but could have only sixth grade knowledge, and the student would take the eighth grade AIMS test.

Chairman Maguire commented that generally there should be a positive correlation between the students who do better on AZELLA and those who do better on AIMS.

Dr. Garcia said he believes that students should be at grade level, and not be in eighth grade and doing sixth grade work. It is important that the instructional capability and the assessment indicate the students are at the correct grade level, otherwise they will always be two grades behind, which is unacceptable.

Ms. Turner said the goal is to get the student into the mainstream classroom and progressing.

Ms. Haver said she believes students should be challenged, but not frustrated.

Ms. Merritt said she looks at the AZELLA as measuring if the student has sufficient proficiency in English to participate successfully in a mainstream class at their grade level. She said the AIMS assesses if the student participates in the class and receives the instruction needed.

Ms. Turner concluded her presentation with a Summary (Attachment 5, page 20).

Chairman Maguire thanked the presenters.

Chairman Maguire noted there were no individuals present wishing to address the Task Force.

Chairman Maguire said the Task Force is attempting to move from two different sets of information, academic/theoretical and practical, and pull those together. Therefore, in future meetings, the Task Force will be reviewing data, as well as strategies and techniques that might fit into the models. He said the next meeting would be on January 25, 2007.

Dr. Garcia moved that the Task Force adjourn. Mr. DiCello seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Arizona ELL Task Force

Alan Maguire, Chairman
February 23, 2007

(Original minutes taken and transcribed by Yvette O'Connor, Committee Secretary, House of Representatives)

Attachments and disc are on file in the Office of the Chief Clerk.